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ATTITUDES TOWARD 4-H



Club Work



Objectives



Methods

*as expressed by Extension Service
Staff Members and Selected
Categories of Lay People in
13 Western States, 1960-61*

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This is a summary of findings from the sixth phase of a long-term Western Region 4-H Club study carried out in the 13 western States. This information should be valuable in planning training programs for extension workers and local 4-H Club leaders, and improving public understanding of 4-H Club work.

Reports of the first five phases may be obtained from the Federal Extension Service. Members of the Western Region 4-H Club Study Committee were:

Mr. C. O. Youngstrom, Associate Director of Extension Service, Idaho, Chairman.

Mr. Howard R. Baker, Assistant Director of Extension Service, Arizona.

Mr. Robert F. Davis, 4-H Club Specialist, California.

Mr. E. J. Kreizinger, State Leader of Extension Research and Training, Washington.

Mr. Cecil G. Staver, State 4-H Club Leader, Colorado.

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Attitudes Toward 4-H—Club Work, Objectives, Methods

By
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PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study was to determine what extension workers, local 4-H leaders, parents of 4-H Club members, key lay adults and older 4-H Club members think of 4-H Club work, and how much they know about it. We collected information to determine the extent of agreement among extension administrators, supervisors and specialists, and the people actually carrying out 4-H Club work at the local and county levels, on the subject of 4-H objectives and methods. Older 4-H Club members and parents of members were classed among those who help carry out club work. We felt that if all those working with 4-H had basically similar objectives and knowledge, boys and girls would have a better experience in 4-H and stay in longer.

SOURCE OF DATA

In 1960 and 1961, we collected data from a random sample of 688 extension workers and 3,754 lay people associated in some way with 4-H Club work in the Western Region. Each respondent was provided with a questionnaire containing statements about 4-H Club work. To each statement, the respondent was asked to indicate agreement, disagreement, lack of information or indecision. Extension workers were asked to react to the largest number of statements—149. Key lay adults were asked to react to the smallest number—55.

For more details of this study, see *A Study of Attitudes Toward and Knowledge of 4-H Club Work of Extension Workers and Selected Categories of Lay People* by Laurel K. Sabrosky, U.S. Fed. Ext. Ser., 83 pp., Washington, D.C., June 1963. Stencil No. ER&T-119(4-63); and *Appendix B—Tables for Use With a Study of Attitudes Toward and Knowledge of 4-H Club Work of Extension Workers and Selected Categories of Lay People* by Laurel K. Sabrosky, U.S. Fed. Ext. Ser., 80 pp., Washington, D.C., June 1963. Stencil No. ER&T-129(5-63).

RESPONSIBILITY OF EXTENSION STAFF MEMBERS IN 4-H CLUB WORK

Extension workers agreed among themselves on some statements about the responsibility of Extension Service staff members, and disagreed on others.

A majority of extension workers and key lay adults saw a place for all levels of the Extension Service in county program planning and in county program operation, even though a significant percentage (about one-fourth) of county workers and lay adults did not think of the United States Department of Agriculture and the Land-Grant Colleges as having a role to play in county extension programs.

Should nearly total responsibility for local 4-H Club programs be turned over to local people? This was a debatable subject among all respondents except the older 4-H Club members. A majority of these members said that **“Local communities should have the privilege of planning their local 4-H Club programs as they want them to be.”* A bare majority of extension workers disapproved of *individual 4-H Clubs’ having full freedom to plan their programs as they want to, including project work, activities and events.* Among the local leaders, there was no decisive reaction to this statement.

Most extension workers and lay people were in favor of active parent participation in local 4-H Club work. The statement did not imply that such participation meant program planning.

*Italicized statements indicate subjects on which respondents did not agree among themselves.

Extension workers, in general, thought that the county extension agent working with youth has a broad educational job, one that can be a life-long challenge. The job was also looked upon as being good preparation for doing extension work with adults. One in 11 agreed that an inexperienced worker will do a better job in 4-H than he will in adult work.

A minority of the Extension workers agreed with each of the following statements:

- *“County extension agents should expect to give extra help to children whose parents will not or cannot help their children.”*
- *“A county extension worker should always go with a 4-H delegation to a 4-H district or State event.”*
- *“Work with boys takes more county extension staff time per 4-H member than work with girls.”*

The findings indicate that Extension workers were not in agreement on these individual-help items. Although less than half agreed with the statements, the proportions who agreed were substantial.

Local 4-H Club leaders found the first statement debatable. Parents of 4-H Club members and older members themselves could not agree on whether or not most members need individual attention from county ex-

tension agents. Extension workers tended to think they do not.

A small but statistically significant majority of extension workers disagreed with the idea that an exceptionally good 4-H member deserves more personal attention from county extension agents than do other 4-H members. A significantly larger per-

centage of lay people disagreed with it.

Confusion on the reason for and objectives of 4-H Club work may have caused some of these responses. For example, one-half of the extension workers agreed with the statement, "*One of 4-H's greatest contributions is that it provides desirable leisure-time activity*," while one-third disagreed.

DONORS AND BREED ASSOCIATIONS

The place of breed associations and donors in 4-H program planning was not clear to extension workers or lay people. The statement, "*If a breed association insists on a grand champion's being chosen in a 4-H show, it will not do any harm to agree to this*," brought a three-way split in the response: roughly one-third agreed with the statement, one-third disagreed with it, and the other third were uninformed or undecided.

Both extension workers and lay people were quite clearly in favor of donors having the opportunity to express themselves concerning the 4-H program, but not having an important place in decision-making about the 4-H program. However, the effect of

donor support on the 4-H program was not clear to the respondents.

Could 4-H work be continued without donors? This was an issue to extension workers and key lay adults. Local leaders tended to think 4-H work could not be continued without donors, but this tendency was barely significant. *Would donor support affect quantity or quality of 4-H work?* This was another unsettled question. Two-thirds of the extension workers (and 55 percent of the key lay adults) felt that good 4-H work is not dependent on donor support.

This confusion in response to statements about donor support may reflect frustration at having to make decisions without research findings or experimental projects to rely on.

4-H CLUB LOCAL LEADERS

Extension Service staff members were in favor of training local leaders. They thought training given in meetings was necessary. Also significant was the small minority of extension workers—1 in 7—who thought that many 4-H local leaders do not need training, or who were undecided or uninformed about the matter.

Twice as many extension workers

favored countywide leader-training meetings as the best way to train local leaders as would vote for personal visits by county agents to individual leaders. The responses from local leaders were in the same direction, but proportionately more of the local leaders were in favor of the countywide leader-training meetings. This is of special interest in light of the relatively few local

leaders who attend such training meetings when they are held.

Who should determine what should be included in leader-training meetings? This was controversial. Some extension workers thought they should have the major say; others thought local leaders should. This was also an issue among local leaders, but they favored letting the extension worker have the major say more than extension workers did.

Both extension workers and lay people seemed to agree that, although local leaders and parents have a great deal of responsibility at the local level, extension workers should be professionally responsible for the 4-H program in local communities as well as at the county level. They also expressed belief that local leaders and parents should teach project subject matter, and should help members with project work in ways other than teaching. However, neither the extension nor lay group could agree on whether "*An exceptionally good 4-H member deserves extra attention from the local leader.*"

Both extension workers and local leaders saw many items as indicators of a local leader success. Most thought that involvement of members in program planning, reenrollment, and completions were major indicators. Number of winners in contests held outside the county and number of

members in the club were considered by most to be indicators of leader success, but not necessarily major indicators. *Leader tenure and leader's attendance at countywide leader meetings* would be questioned as major indicators by about one-half of the respondents.

The idea that "*Women have more time to be 4-H leaders than do men*" was an issue among both extension workers and lay people. Among extension workers, it was mainly the men who expressed belief in this idea. The patterns of men and women local leaders' thinking were similar. The statement, "*The present ratio of two women leaders to one man leader is all right*" lacked a concensus of opinion among extension workers and local leaders, both men and women.

Most extension workers would like a plan that recognizes all local leaders for what they do. Both extension workers and local leaders rated appreciation expressed by club members and parents as the best recognition. Local leaders rated appreciation expressed by extension workers as the third best kind of recognition; extension workers themselves rated this as the fifth best. Local leaders did not rate publicity as high as did extension workers. Extension workers did not rate pins given at periodic intervals as high as did local leaders.

4-H CLIENTELE

A majority of Extension workers agreed that the Extension Service has some education responsibility to rural nonfarm and urban youth. They also believed that these youths need 4-H Club work. The emphasis Extension should put on 4-H Club work in urban

areas was an unsettled matter among both extension workers and key lay adults.

Extension workers agreed that "*4-H Club work is not the only way the Extension Service can work with boys and girls.*" This idea was a debatable

one among local leaders and key lay adults, the people who are often on Extension advisory committees.

Extension workers believed that 4-H Club work should be for youth of all ages from 10 on up. In spite of this interest in a large segment of our population, extension workers did not express great interest in a large 4-H Club enrollment. Key lay adults, in general, believed that "*A large enrollment usually is an indication of a good 4-H program.*" This was an issue among extension workers. On the other hand, *whether to aim at a good 4-H program for a limited number or to go out for a large number of members* was an issue among key lay adults. A majority of extension workers were in favor of a good 4-H program for a limited number.

Extension workers tended to disagree with the statement that "*The Extension Service may limit the number of 4-H Club members or who may become 4-H Club members,*" even though age has always been a qualification for 4-H membership. Limiting membership was an issue among all categories of lay people in the study. Extension workers did not think that 4-H Club membership should be based on completing a year's work, or on agreement to enter competition. There was a divergence of opinion among all categories of lay people except key lay adults about *permitting 4-H Club members to continue in 4-H Club work when they had not completed a year's requirements.* Key lay adults tended more than the others to agree with the extension workers.

About one-half of the extension workers disapproved of *allowing boys and girls younger than 10 years of age to join 4-H Clubs;* one-fourth approved of doing so; one-fourth felt uninformed or undecided.

Extension workers and lay people were almost all in agreement with letting local leaders' and extension workers' children enter 4-H competitions. However, *allowing college students and married persons to enter 4-H competitions* was controversial to extension workers. Lay people were not asked about college students or married persons.

Who does decide on rules for 4-H Club eligibility? This is a subject that needs agreement among both extension workers and lay people. A majority of extension workers did not believe that "*Local leaders of a club should be the ones to decide;*" however, one-half of the lay adults did believe this.

"Some boys and girls do not have facilities to carry 4-H projects." Extension workers were divided on this subject. On the other hand, a majority of extension workers thought that "*Some boys and girls cannot afford to carry 4-H projects.*" A majority of the parents and older 4-H Club members thought that some boys and girls do not have the facilities; about half of them thought some youth could not afford 4-H projects.

Older members joined extension workers in debating the idea of shifting children who cannot afford certain 4-H project material to less expensive projects. Local leaders and parents agreed with the idea.

4-H CLUB PROJECT WORK

Extension workers, almost to a man, believe there are other aspects of 4-H Club work that are as important as the project. Local leaders as well as other lay people expressed this same philosophy.

However, when it came down to operational details, the rather high importance given to the project by extension workers became evident. Seventy percent of them would consider the status of project work as the major basis for determining completion of a member's 4-H work for the year. Two-thirds of them would consider project work up to date as one of the criteria for determining if a boy or girl may go to camp. Local 4-H Club leaders agreed with extension workers on these items.

Four statements on the importance of the 4-H project did not receive a majority vote for or against them from extension workers:

1. *"Professional Extension people judge a county extension worker's 4-H work primarily on the excellence of project work."*
2. *"People in the county judge a county extension agent's 4-H primarily on the excellence of 4-H members' project work."*
3. *"A local 4-H Club can be 'good' and still have a low percentage of project completions."*
4. *"A 4-H member should be considered 'Incomplete' for his year's work if he does not finish his project, regardless of the reason."*

The lay people's responses showed the second and fourth to be issues. They were not given the first and third.

One set of statements dealt with certain characteristics of the project. Although a statistically significant proportion (about one-sixth) of the extension workers and lay people thought of the 4-H project as being something of especially high quality, a majority thought of the project as not having to meet excessively high-level criteria. There was no consensus of opinion about how practical the 4-H project should be, however.

"4-H project work is evaluated by the same practical and economic criteria that men and women use to judge their own work." Parents and older members as well as extension workers questioned this.

All extension workers thought that a 4-H Club member should like his project.

Extension workers and local leaders agreed that owning a project is important, and that members learn more if they own their projects. They also agreed that members learn more if they exhibit their project work. However, further statements concerning exhibiting showed that the importance of exhibiting is debatable, a not unexpected reaction in an unresearched field. *"A 4-H member should exhibit his project only if he wants to,"* and *"A 4-H member should exhibit his project as a requirement for completion,"* (conflicting attitudes) were issues among extension workers. A majority of the local leaders agreed to the last statement.

Practically all extension workers and local leaders thought that the member's doing the project work himself, finishing a piece of work, having his project seen by his local leader and filling out a record should be bases for determining satisfactory project completion. Two-thirds to three-quarters of them thought that writing a story or narrative, attending a specified number of club meetings, and acceptable grammar and spelling in the record should also be bases for determining satisfactory project completion. *Exhibiting at an achievement day or fair, putting on a demonstration, and attending a specified number of county 4-H events as bases for determining completion* were not agreed or disagreed with by a majority of extension workers. Local leaders also debated the last of these three. Although a majority of extension workers and local leaders would

not say that a member should have his project seen by the extension agent in order to complete, the data showed that one-fourth of the extension workers and two-fifths of the local leaders did want this included. Even though research findings have indicated that having his project visited is good for the member, such findings definitely do not imply that a member's rating should depend on something the agent or leader does.

Extension workers and lay people were in favor of group work for 4-H Club members. However, *allowing a 4-H Club member to carry only a group project* was a controversial topic for extension workers. Whether "*Project clubs are better than community clubs for 10-to-12 year-olds*," also lacked agreement. A slight majority of extension workers thought that community clubs were better than project clubs for teenagers.

COMPETITION IN 4-H CLUB WORK

In the area of competition we found significant differences between the expressed ideas and beliefs of extension workers and those of lay people.

Extension workers, to some extent, wavered between competitive-mindedness and neutrality toward competition. Proportionately more lay people than extension workers tended to be competitive-minded. Older 4-H members seemed, in general, to be more competitive-minded than lay adults or extension workers.

Extension workers, as a group, have not decided if "*Trying to win over someone else is typical of our American way of life*." However, two-thirds of them did not think "winning high monetary or material prizes is a desirable part of our American way of

life." Lay adults thought about the same as extension workers on this latter item. It was a controversial subject for the older 4-H Club members: nearly half agreed with the statement. In spite of this expressed attitude, most of them agreed that a local club can be considered "good" and still not have a single winner in a 4-H contest or exhibit beyond the local club level. Lay adults and extension workers also agreed with this latter statement.

The data on statements concerned with the effect of the State or national 4-H awards program on a county program gave a confused picture. "*A county 4-H program suffers if it produces no State winners over a period of years*," was agreed with by one-third of the extension workers. One-half

did not think it would suffer. However, half of the extension workers did not think that "*A county 4-H program can be just as successful without either State or national awards as it is with them.*" Local leaders' reactions to the first statement indicated questions among them as a group, also.

In addition to these responses, we find two-thirds of the extension workers agreeing that the national 4-H awards program has a good effect on the county 4-H program. The trend of the responses seemed to be in favor of State and national 4-H award programs.

The idea that "*A 4-H Club which participates actively in community affairs does more for good public relations than one which concentrates on county or State fair participation,*" was agreed with by a majority of all adults in the study. Older 4-H Club members' responses showed divergent opinions. This is consistent with the older members' responses to the statement, "*Winning in competitive exhibits or contests is as important to the development of a youth as being accepted and liked in his home community.*" Fifty-six percent of them agreed with this statement, while it was an issue for the lay adults in the study. Extension workers tended to disagree with the statement.

Do all children like to compete? A bare majority of extension workers said no. Lay people in the study could not come to any agreement on this subject.

Both extension workers and lay people indicated a relatively strong belief in the benefits derived from competition, or in good characteristics related to competition, even though their responses to relevant statements showed some inconsistency. Two-thirds of the extension workers agreed that some boys and girls learn more when com-

petition is involved, others learn less. This statement is borne out by research. Twenty percent of the extension workers disagreed with the statement.

In spite of this tendency to recognize human development needs, the statement, "*4-H members learn more when competition is involved than when it is not,*" brought responses indicating that this was debatable among extension workers. Responses from lay people indicated they believed this statement to be true. Extension workers and lay people believed good citizenship was one benefit gained from competition. This is neither supported nor refuted by research.

Practically no extension workers disagreed with the idea that 4-H competitors are usually cooperative with their fellow members. Research does not support this in a situation where individuals compete against individuals.

Extension workers were in fair agreement about permitting repetition of competitive experiences by individual 4-H Club members. Although extension workers would distribute the winning places among as many competitors as possible, they were not as concerned about spreading the *opportunity to compete* among as many members as possible. As long as a member had not won the top prize, extension workers apparently thought he should be permitted to continue to enter the competition. *Allowing a member to enter a competition after having won the top prize in it* was approved by twice as great a proportion of lay people (one-half) as by extension workers (one-fourth).

Most extension workers and lay people agreed that clubs with no potential winners should get at least as much attention from county extension agents as any other clubs. However, the im-

portance given competition might interfere. From two-thirds to four-fifths of the different categories of respondents agreed that "members who are about to compete with 4-H members from other counties deserve personal attention from county extension agents."

Extension workers' responses showed that they did not agree among themselves about whether, "*A county extension agent whose members win State awards should be the agent to go to out-of-State events when any go.*" Key lay adults did agree with this statement.

4-H ACTIVITIES OR EVENTS

Both extension workers and lay people were in favor of 4-H activities or events. However, extension workers could not come to agreement on the statements, "*All 4-H members in the State benefit from State (4-H events),*" and "*All 4-H members in the county benefit from county 4-H events.*" Local 4-H leaders agreed with the first.

Local leaders' and key lay adults' reactions to the statement that "*Boys and girls who stay in 4-H do so mainly because of activities or events,*" showed that members of these two groups do not agree among themselves on the subject. Extension workers, on the other hand, tended to be undecided or uninformed about this subject.

SOME OBSERVATIONS

To most statements in the study, all with direct relevance to 4-H Club work, around one-seventh of the extension workers responded with "Haven't made up my mind on this" or "Not informed on this."

More women than men, whether extension workers or lay people, were in favor of regulations and requirements,

and of enforcing them. More men than women, whether extension workers or lay people, favored contests.

Local 4-H leaders were more regulation-minded than extension workers. The more tenure local leaders had, the more regulation-minded, requirement-minded, and contest-minded they were.

SOME SUGGESTIONS prompted by this study. . .

● RECRUITING

When recruiting professional 4-H Club workers and local 4-H Club leaders:

- Recruit those who seem most likely to accept the educational objectives of 4-H Club work, to accept responsibilities, and to take advantage of training opportunities.

● TRAINING

When training extension workers and local leaders in 4-H Club work:

- Keep lines of communication open among extension administrators, program leaders, subject matter specialists, information staff members, county extension workers, and local 4-H Club leaders and advisers.
- Bring about agreement on policy matters in 4-H Club work and acceptance of research findings, through understandable communications and ample discussion.
- Keep the training on how to do 4-H Club work in line with the educational objectives of 4-H Club work.

● INFORMING

When informing lay people about 4-H:

- Keep 4-H Club educational objectives foremost.
- Evaluate frequently the image created to be sure that it is consistent with 4-H Club educational objectives.